



# Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

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## OPEN SPACE STEWARDSHIP AND POLICES WORK GROUP

January 5, 2022

4:30 P.M.

**Virtual Meeting Only**

## REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Call to Order

1. Minutes from October 13, 2021 Meeting
2. Discussion on ARPA Funding for Open Space
3. Discussion on Open Space Rangers Program
4. Discussion on Habitat Maintenance Program
5. Discussion on Invasive Plant Removal Practices

Adjournment

**Open Space Stewardship & Policies Work Group**  
**Wednesday, October 13, 2021**  
**4:00 PM- Via Zoom Video Conference**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT**

**PRESENT:** Margery Winters and Susan Masino

**ALSO PRESENT:** Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation and Zoning Compliance Officer, Tom Hazel, and Tom Fitzgerald, Management Specialist, and Francine Beland, Town Assessor were also in attendance.

**Call to Order**

Ms. Winters called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM

**1. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the September 1, 2021 Open Space subcommittee workgroup meeting were accepted.

**2. Draft PA-490 Policy**

Mr. Hazel shared that a PA-490 is establishing you as a farm for tax purposes and most towns will recognize when you qualify for a PA 490. Ms. Masino shared that she attended a workshop on this and that this designation could apply to farmland, forest, and a marine category (which doesn't apply to Simsbury). She asked if the workgroup wanted to add an Open Space category. Ms. Masino stated that there are about 30 towns that have an Open Space category. She commented that it seemed to make sense that a minimum of three acres would be a reasonable size (the minimum you need to own a horse for example). Mr. Hazel commented that big picture do they want something the size of three acres to be within open space while it's preserved as open space under a PA-490 and then there is a change of sale, he questioned if they are going to lose that if someone disqualifies themselves from the PA 490 and then develops everything. Ms. Winters asked if it just says double the lot size, are we still talking about R15s and 20s. Mr. Hazel suggested to push it into zones where it is a little bit more advantageous. Ms. Masino suggested that perhaps they say three acres or meets the criteria for open space acquisition. She stated that with the PA-490 it is like a temporary conservation easement where you still pay taxes but you pay reduced taxes. Mr. Hazel shared that if it was going to be an Open Space PA-490, it would get a referral from the Open Space Committee that it meets the criteria and then it goes to the assessor and gets processed. Mr. Hazel suggested this topic be discussed more fully at the full committee meeting with the Town Assessor present.

Ms. Beland joined the meeting. Mr. Hazel asked what the savings would be for a person who designates a 10,000 square foot lot as PA-490 or is it triggered more on someone who has a 10 acre lot and all they need is 3 acres so they can put that aside and actually get a larger chunk of savings. Ms. Beland shared that the open space classification is for tax purposes. If the town wants to preserve land and provide an owner of a property that has a double lot where they could go and have it subdivided or split to sell off in order to save because if it is buildable it will be assessed as such. She stated open space is only by ordinance so not all towns have that. She stated that typically there is a savings. Mr. Hazel asked if they wanted to make sure it is valuable open space because they are looking at tax savings for that land. Ms. Beland commented that if someone comes to her and wanted to classify their excess acreage as open space she would

then have to go and take a look at the map and figure out if it is in a designated area where they can, then size per the criteria and then go on for the approval process. Mr. Hazel stated that because of the way the PA-490 is set up it's an assessor thing so they wouldn't have the authority for review and recommendation. Ms. Beland stated that the only thing they need to do is it needs to be areas designated in the plan and the POCD. Mr. Hazel confirmed with Ms. Beland that the Open Space PA-490 needs to be spelled out under the Open Space section of the POCD. Mr. Hazel stated that if they do double the lot size it makes it available to more people and gets more land that is developable. Ms. Beland stated that once someone classified and they got approved, they have a penalty period that lasts 10 years from that assessment date, if they sell it within that 10 year period there's a penalty and it decreases year over year. Mr. Hazel stated he felt that gives them enough information to bring to the full committee to recommend that the Planning Commission put this into the POCD so that it can be fully adopted and utilized. Ms. Beland commented that her urgency to this is that they do have about a dozen parcels that for some reason have been classified as that and she wouldn't be able to approve any other owners if they came forward so they do need some criteria. Mr. Hazel stated he will work with Mr. Glidden to let him know there is an urgency to their referral either way and he will find out when they can get it onto the Planning Commission's agenda.

### **3. Model Agricultural Practices**

Mr. Hazel stated that Ms. Capriola had him make the changes in the RFP. The Committee stated that they felt this item was buttoned up.

### **3. Draft Open Space Acquisition Policy**

Ms. Winters stated that she knows Mr. Hazel is concerned about what people want to use these areas for in the future, however, many of them are restricted by how they were funded. Mr. Hazel stated that if the Town acquires land, they should have to the right to do what they want with it. Ms. Masino clarified that Ms. Peterson was stating at their full committee meeting is that if you purchase land for C.P.R. that's where you would have soccer fields but if you purchase it for Open Space, you wouldn't have soccer fields, but there's only one big bucket. Ms. Masino commented that there are certain natural areas that they need to protect, she stated that she feels it was just a misunderstanding about C.P.R. vs. Open Space. Mr. Hazel stated that his concern was changing the language in the criteria document to make it locked up, the language in the document is just saying that open space can meet these different criteria. Ms. Masino commented that she feels that what they are hashing out doesn't even need to be in that introductory paragraph because it is laid out below. She feels it needs more visionary conceptual language that just lays out the main things. Ms. Masino suggested taking out some of the language of the first paragraph and put in a more general mission statement. Ms. Masino will edit the document so everyone can see the edits and then this item will be on the agenda for the full committee.

## **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Heather Taylor  
Committee Clerk